

May 31, 2006

Chairman Palmer and members of the Education Committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today concerning HB 4575 and HB 5709.

Please indulge me while I give you a short background of my experience with education. I do not wish you to think me a malcontent but a seriously concerned person. The first time I came before the House Education Committee was twenty some years ago when House Appropriation Chair Richard Young facilitated the legislation to make possible the annexation of the North Dearborn Heights School District to the Crestwood District and the property transfer of part of the Cherry Hill School District to Crestwood and other part to the Westwood District. It took a lot of hard work from a lot of people to make it happen. As a result, both districts were made more educationally and financially sound. I was also a plaintiff in the Durant case during my eight years of service on the Crestwood Board of Education, which ended in 1995.

All during that period and to this day, I have tried to defend the Headlee Amendment in the courts and out. I testified before the Blue Ribbon Committee, was a plaintiff in the class action suit, which stopped Wayne County's illegal property transfer tax and many more court cases than even I can remember.

Little by little I watched the Headlee Amendment get eroded by loopholes created through legislation and in the courts. I watched as the sovereign electorate's ability to limit state and local government were disregarded. The most recent method is by what we are calling "phantom mills". These are mills passed over and above those permitted by law or charter and held in reserve to override the Headlee Amendment for years into the future. A method I did not know existed until it was placed on the ballot in my school district with little or no notice to the community. I who had been a Headlee Amendment guru had to read the proposal four times to understand what they were proposing. I couldn't believe it. It violated every intent of the Headlee amendment. We have been waiting over a year for an Attorney General's Opinion for something we thought was obvious.

I never thought I would be here today defending Proposal A. I worked very hard for its defeat for a number of reasons the primary of which was uniformity of taxation. But here I am, because we are a nation of laws. I believe that the people of this State passed Proposal A and even if I did not agree with them, it is the law. It was passed, I believe, out of the frustration of taxpayers and a threat of an even worse fate.

The bills you are considering require a 3/4 vote of the House and Senate. How do I know that? Because the voters of Michigan say it is so. This time you are expanding the criteria to busses and technology. Next time it will be something else. Soon bonds will take care of everything except salaries, health insurance and retirement. If the legislature continues to disregard the taxpayers you will expedite the next taxpayer revolt. All in all the taxpayers are patient and are willing to take a lot of abuse. They are now getting desperate. You can make all the excuses you wish but the economy is bad and job prospects are low. My husband and I were in business in this state for 27 years before we gave up. They can sneak millages and bond proposals in under the radar but sooner or later comes the judgment. State and local government must learn to live within the taxpayer's means and legislators must respect the decisions of the taxpayers.

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